

State rep. should rethink his position

To the editor:

I was extremely disappointed to read Representative Converse's letter to the editor in the March 27 edition of the *Eagle Times*.

Therein he expressed his hope that Gov. Lynch *not* veto the bill reducing the penalty for possession of marijuana, HB-1623. I find it interesting that while exploring the ramifications of this bill, Representative Converse never thought to call the Chief of Police in the city which he supposedly represents to discuss the bill.

Maybe he equally dismisses the fact that Gov. Lynch's wife is a physician and both are likely aware of the rapidly emerging science on adolescent brain development and the clear negative impact that drugs such as marijuana have thereon. Science has clearly shown that the adolescent brain continues to develop between the ages of 14 and 24 with many critical areas such as propensity towards addiction problems taking place during this time. Youngsters who use drugs during this developmental phase show noticeable brain differences from those who do not.

Drug use and abuse, including marijuana, between the ages of 14 and 24 can have a negative impact on IQ, increase chances of addiction disorders, and causes other lasting neurological changes. Yet, with this emerging sci-

ence, nearly all the proponents of HB-1623, including Rep. Converse, point to this age group as the primary group to benefit from reducing the penalty for possession of marijuana thereby sending the message to this age group that "it's okay to possess a little marijuana, it's not that serious."

That message, targeted at this age group is ridiculous. That is the age group most at risk. The House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, which spent the most time studying this bill, weighing the testimony of the proponents and opponents to the bill voted 13-5 against passage. However, Representative Converse disregarded the overwhelming majority of the committee charged with thoroughly examining this issue, didn't feel it was necessary to even check with the local police chief, and now thinks Governor Lynch is off base.

The person who should be reconsidering their position on HB-1623 is Representative Converse, not Governor Lynch.

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